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E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: OVIP, KS (GERALD R. FORD)

SUBJECT: PRESIDENT'S TRIP TO KOREA: STATUS REPORT

FOLLOWING IS SUMMARY REPORT OF SITUATION IN KOREA IN RELATIONSHIP TO PLANNING AND PREPARATIONS FOR PRESIDENT'S VISIT TO KOREA NOVEMBER 22-23:

1. INTERNAL SITUATION IN KOREA. INCREASING BUT STILL MANAGEABLE DISSIDENT ACTIVITY CONTINUES AS OPPOSITION ELEMENTS ARE MANEUVERING TO WRING CONCESSIONS FROM GOVERNMENT BEFORE PRESIDENT'S VISIT. STUDENTS ARE CONFRONTING POLICE ALMOST DAILY, DEMANDING AMNESTY FOR ARRESTED COLLEAGUES AND CONSTITUTIONAL REVISION. DEMONSTRATIONS TAKING PLACE BY CAMPUSES BUT SOME BEGINNING TO SPREAD OUT ON STREETS; GOVERNMENT RESPONDING REGULARLY WITH TEAR GAS AND SOME DETENTIONS. MOST MAJOR

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UNIVERSITIES ARE CLOSED TEMPORARILY TO AVOID DISCIPLINARY ACTION BY GOVERNMENT. PROSPECTS ARE THAT MANY, POSSIBLY

MOST UNIVERSITIES WILL BE CLOSED BY DATE OF PRESIDENT'S VISIT. JOURNALISTS HAVE (SO FAR) SUCCESSFULLY DEFIED GOVERNMENT CONTROL EFFORTS BY WORK STOPPAGE WHICH ENDED WHEN PUBLISHERS AGREED TO PRINT MANIFESTO ON FREEDOM OF PRESS. GOVERNMENT PARTIES ARE BLOCKING OPPOSITION DEMANDS IN NATIONAL ASSEMBLY THAT CONSTITUTIONAL REVISION COMMITTEE BE FORMED. GOVERNMENT REACTION SO FAR HAS BEEN RESTRAINED (EITHER CONSCIOUSLY OR THROUGH INDECISION) BUT GOVERNMENT

VERY MUCH AWARE IT FACING SERIOUS CHALLENGE. ROKG SHOWS NO INDICATION AT THIS POINT OF LACK OF CONFIDENCE IN ABILITY TO HANDLE SITUATION IN MANNER THAT WILL NOT JEOPARDIZE VISIT.

2. U.S. MISSIONARY ACTIVITY. SIXTY MISSIONARIES IN KOREA HAVE SIGNED LETTER WHICH DEPOSITED WITH EMBASSY FOR TRANSMITTAL TO PRESIDENT FORD ASKING THAT HE URGE RELEASE OF PRISONERS AND RESTORATION OF FORMER CONSTITUTION. LETTER ALSO ASKS FOR MEETING WITH PRESIDENT OR STAFF MEMBER. IN MEETING AT EMBASSY, MISSIONARIES EXPRESSED CONCERN OVER PRESIDENT'S VISIT AND DETERIORATING KOREAN POLITICAL SITUATION BUT DID NOT REQUEST THAT VISIT BE CANCELLED. IN TOKYO, MISSIONARY GROUP HAS APPEALED TO EMBASSY TO URGE CANCELLATION OF TRIP TO KOREA. WE BELIEVE THAT A MEETING WITH SOMEONE RECOGNIZED AS PART OF PRESIDENT'S IMMEDIATE STAFF WOULD ASSURE MISSIONARIES AND CHURCHES THEY REPRESENT THAT THEIR CONCERNS ARE BEING HEARD. WE ALSO BELIEVE SUCH A MEETING WOULD BE UNDERSTOOD BY ROKG.

3. CONGRESSIONAL CONCERN. CONGRESSMEN O'NEILL, FRASER, UDALL, BINGHAM, HAMILTON, MINK, MEEDS, AND WHALEN HAVE SENT PRESIDENT JOINT LETTER REQUESTING MEETING AND URGING HE CONVEY TO PARK CONCERN OVER "DESTRUCTION OF DEMOCRACY IN KOREA". THEY URGE PRESIDENT TO MEET ALSO WITH OPPOSITION PEOPLE IN KOREA.

4. NORTH KOREAN REACTION. ONLY SUBSTANTIVE NORTH KOREAN REACTION HAS BEEN TO SEIZE ON WIRE SERVICE REPORTS OF

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OPPOSITION LEADER KIM YONG-SAM'S EXPRESSED RESERVATIONS ON VISIT AND ATTEMPT TO PORTRAY THEM AS EVIDENCE OF MASSIVE PUBLIC RESISTANCE TO VISIT. NORTH KOREA HAS ALSO SOUGHT TO EXPLOIT JAPAN NUCLEAR CONTROVERSY BY CALLING MILITARY ARMISTICE COMMISSION MEETING TO CITE LAROQUE TESTIMONY AS EVIDENCE USG RISKING NUCLEAR WAR IN KOREA. SO FAR THERE HAS BEEN LITTLE PRESS INTEREST.

5. STAFF WORK. RESPONSE TO NSSM 211 ON SECURITY ASSISTANCE NEARING COMPLETION AND WILL BE AVAILABLE IN TIME AS

GUIDANCE FOR DISCUSSIONS ON THIS SUBJECT. EXPECT OTHER
BRIEFING MATERIALS TO BE COMPLETED EARLY NEXT WEEK. INGERSOLL

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